

SPRING 2013

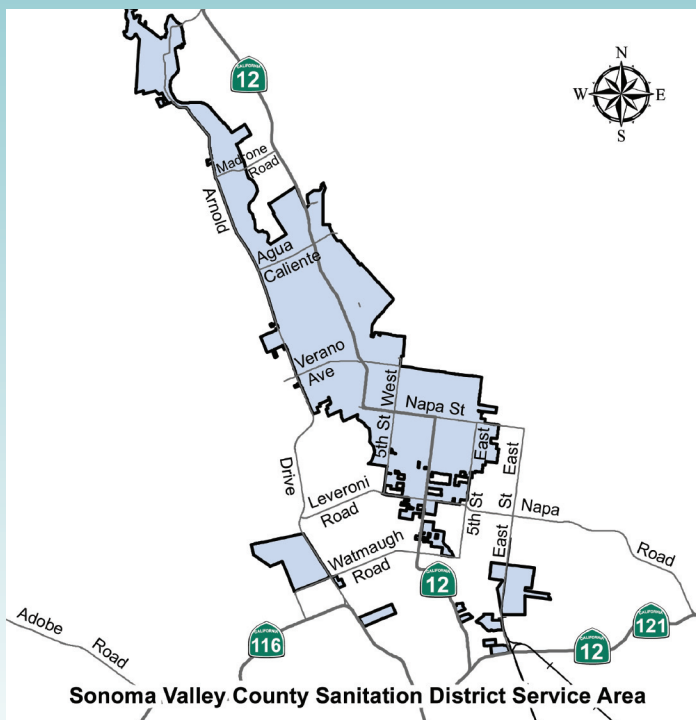
SONOMA VALLEY COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT **NEWS**

INSIDE SPRING 2013

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The Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District Wastewater Treatment Plant treats wastewater to tertiary treatment levels (also referred to as advanced water treatment). The tertiary filtration process is pictured above.



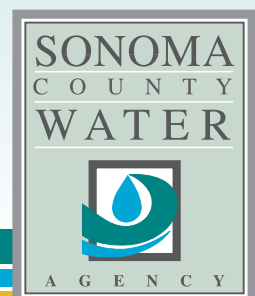
About the Sanitation District

During a 1995 restructuring of the Sonoma County government, the Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) assumed responsibility for managing and operating eight different sanitation districts and zones, including the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District (Sanitation District).

The Sanitation District began operations in 1953. Currently, its service recipients number 17,027 Equivalent Single-Family Dwellings within a 4,500-acre service area. The treatment plant has a design capacity of 3 million gallons per day (average daily dry weather flow) and treats wastewater to tertiary treatment levels (also referred to as advanced water treatment).

Between May 1 and October 30, the recycled water is used for irrigation. Between November 1 and April 30, recycled water is discharged into Schell Slough or Hudeman Slough.

The Sanitation District Board consists of the Mayor of the City of Sonoma and the Chair and First District Supervisor of the Water Agency's Board. ●



www.sonomacountywater.org

Welcome to the First Issue of Your Sanitation District's Newsletter

I am pleased to welcome you to the first issue of the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District customer newsletter. The District's Board of Directors advised staff to improve communications with our customers and we hope this newsletter helps in serving that purpose.

This twice-a-year newsletter, to be distributed in the spring and fall of each year, is produced to communicate District budget and rate information, including proposed increases and upcoming public hearings, along with capital improvement projects and water efficiency tips.



Grant Davis, General Manager
Sonoma County Water Agency

Included in this issue is the Proposition 218 Notice for the District's proposed Fiscal Year 2013-2014 sanitation rates. The Notice with information about the proposed rates is included on pages 5-6 of this newsletter. The return protest form is located on page 7. Frequently asked questions about the District's budget process are on pages 3-4.

The District's Board and staff are honored to serve our community by collecting and treating our wastewater and putting it back into use in the most beneficial way possible. Together, we are working to secure our future by investing in our water resources, environment and community. ●

Meet Your Board

The Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District Board of Directors (Sanitation District) is composed of the three people who hold these elected positions: the Mayor, City of Sonoma and the Chair and First District Supervisor, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors/Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency).

The current Sanitation District Board members include the following:

City of Sonoma Mayor **Ken Brown**, who has served on the City Council since November 1998. He may be reached at ken@bearflagsocialclub.com or (707) 938-8623.

First District Supervisor/Director **Susan Gorin**, who was elected in November 2012 to a four-year term. She may be reached at Susan.Gorin@sonoma-county.org or (707) 565-2241.

Chair of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors/Water Agency **David Rabbitt**, who was elected as Second District Supervisor in November 2010 to a four-year term. He may be reached at David.Rabbitt@sonoma-county.org or (707) 565-2241. ●



Ken Brown



David Rabbitt



Susan Gorin

How Can I Reduce My Household's Winter Water Use and Sewer Bill?

- Turn off your irrigation system during the rainy season. Hand water potted and rain-sheltered plants when necessary.
- Check for and repair leaks immediately.
- Replace old, inefficient toilets with new high-efficiency toilets that use 1.1 gallons per flush or less. The Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District provides rebates of up to \$150. Go to www.sonomacountywater.org/rebates for more information or call the Water Use Efficiency Program at (707) 547-1918.
- Take advantage of rebates from your water provider. The City of Sonoma and Valley of the Moon Water District offer rebates on high-efficiency clothes washers. Go to www.savingwaterpartnership.org/washer-rebate for more information.
- Use a broom, not a hose, to clean your driveway, deck or patio.
- Use front-load washing machines.
- Run the dishwasher and clothes washer with full loads only.
- Don't let water run while shaving, brushing teeth or rinsing dishes. •

Water Agency Educational Tours

Sanitation System Operations

Tour participants will experience an in-depth look at how wastewater is treated during a Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District Wastewater Treatment Plant tour on Saturday, April 13, from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., in Sonoma.

Water Supply System

If you are curious about the facilities that pump and clean the water that's delivered by the Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) to more than 600,000 residents in portions of Sonoma and Marin counties, sign up to take a free public tour of the Russian River water supply system.

Carbon Free Water by 2015

Participants will see a subset of energy and sustainability projects the Water Agency has developed in an effort to deliver carbon-free water by 2015 during a tour Thursday, April 11, from 5-6:30 p.m. at 404 Aviation Blvd., Santa Rosa.

Registration Information — Visit www.sonomacountywater.org/tours and fill out the online registration form. For more information, contact Ryan Pedrotti at 707-521-6209 or ryanp@scwa.ca.gov. •

Understanding Your District Budget & Fees

The Budget Process

The fiscal year of the sanitation districts and zones starts on July 1st of each year and runs through June 30th of the following year. Thus the following information concerns the period July 1, 2013, through June 30, 2014. The budgets are prepared approximately six months in advance of the period they cover so that there is ample opportunity for public input and to allow the required review and approval process to take place.

Public input is a continuous process and can occur at any time during the year. Specific maintenance and construction projects and priorities are regularly reviewed and revised by staff. Many of these projects have their own environmental and construction approval process, which includes public input.

A five-year capital plan is prepared for the district or zone by the staff based on the need for replacement of aging collection systems and other assets necessary to process the wastewater according to regulatory requirements.

Priorities for projects are assigned taking public input, maintenance data and assessment of the current condition of the facilities into account. The funds available for capital improvements and replacement are then planned for in such a way as to level the expenditures from year to year and thus to reduce the impact that sharp increases in rates would have on the ratepayers.

Budgets also take into account current maintenance and operations costs, any bond or loan repayments, and the need to maintain sufficient financial reserves to cover unexpected damage or system failures. Budgets are developed using estimates for both these items and for revenues. Because of the uneven timing of the revenues paid to the district and because actual costs rarely turn out exactly equal to our estimates, fund balances or retained earnings are kept at all times. These fund balances typically amount to three to six months of operating expenses.

Continued on page 4

Budget Approval

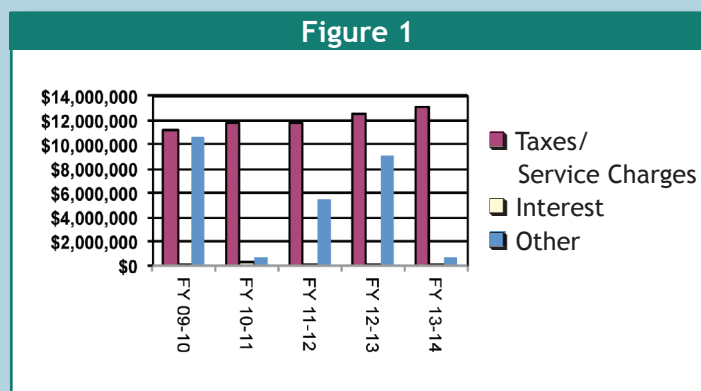
Once staff has developed the proposed budgets and rates, the budgets are sent to libraries around the county and are available for public review at those locations and at the Sonoma County Water Agency. This typically happens at the end of March each year. Notices of the proposed rate are also sent to the owners of all the properties in the district at that time. The public can protest rate increases up to the date of the rate hearings, which are typically held in mid-May at the Board of Supervisors chambers.

Budget Summary

Where the Money Comes From

The primary source of revenues are the fees charged to district rate payers and collected on the property tax bills sent out by the County Assessor. Other sources of revenue include interest on fund balances and fees charged for new connections. Proceeds from bonds and debt paid through property assessments may increase the funds available to spend on capital projects but are not counted as revenue to the district.

Figure 1 is a chart showing the district's revenue for the last four years and the proposed budget for the next fiscal year.



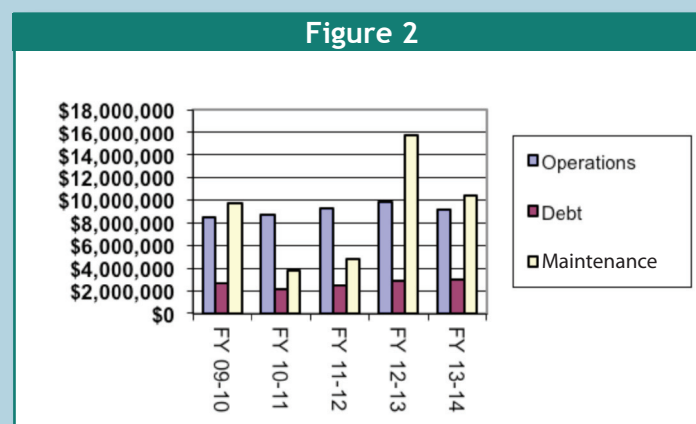
Where the Money Goes

The district spends money to:

- Operate the wastewater collection and treatment facilities,
- Maintain and repair district facilities, and
- Repay bond, other debt and miscellaneous liabilities that may occur as a result of operation.

The district also spends money to accomplish the capital projects needed in the district.

Figure 2 shows the trends in the expense levels over the last four years and next year's budget. ●



Glossary

Capital Project - A project that replaces or adds assets valued at more than \$25,000.

Operations - Those activities that provide direct service to system users or to support direct service.

Maintenance - Those activities that work to keep current equipment, facilities and infrastructure operational.

ESD - Equivalent Single Family Dwelling (Commercial and multi-residential properties are charged the flat rate times the number of ESDs).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why do my rates seem to increase every year?

A: We try to manage the system to minimize rate increases while ensuring the infrastructure will be in place to handle present and future needs. The costs of operating the treatment plant and collection system as well as paying for repairs, maintenance and replacement of worn out infrastructure must be paid by the users of the system.

Q: What is a volume-based rate structure?

A: The volume-based rate structure is comprised of a volume charge (30 percent of the total rate) and a fixed charge (70 percent of the total rate). The volume-based charge recovers costs to the sewage treatment and collection

system that are affected by use and vary with the amount of sewage conveyed and treated. The volume charge is calculated by the average monthly winter water use per household based on specified winter months (December and January) multiplied by 12 months to derive the annual use. Average winter water use provides an accurate accounting of indoor water use and its impact to the District's treatment facilities because outdoor irrigation should be turned down or off during the winter months. Thus, to maximize savings on your sewer bill, District customers should avoid using outside water sources during the specified winter months. The fixed charge, which comprises 70 percent of the total rate, recovers costs that the sewage treatment and collection system incurs regardless of increased or decreased sewage into the system. ●

PROPOSITION 218

Sonoma County Water Agency Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING PROPOSED SEWER SERVICE FEE INCREASE

Date, Time, and Place of Public Hearing

On May 21, 2013, at 10:00 a.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, in the Board Meeting Room, 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, California, the Board of Directors (Board) of the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District (District) will conduct a public hearing to consider increasing the annual sewer service charge to be collected on account of sewage collection and treatment services provided by the sewer system of the District to property within the District.

Property Owner Obligation

The charge will be imposed on each parcel upon which is located one or more structures which are connected to the system and the charge will be collected on the general property tax bill administered by Sonoma County. Payment of the charge will be the responsibility of the owner of the parcel.

Amount of Proposed Charge Increase For Non-Residential Users And Residential Users With No Public Water Connection/New Proposed Method For Residential Users With A Public Water Connection

Effective July 1, 2013 the District proposes to increase the charge to \$811 per year per "equivalent single-family dwelling" (ESD) for non-residential users and residential users with no public water connection, an increase of \$39, or 5.0% versus current year. This charge has been calculated by dividing the annual costs of providing wastewater treatment and collection service by the estimated number of ESDs. For residential users with a public water connection, the fee will be partly based on water use, as described below. The draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2013-14 describes the total annual expenses in detail and is available for review at the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, c/o the Sonoma County Water Agency, 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California 95403, and the Sonoma County Regional Libraries in Santa Rosa (Main & Northwest), Windsor, Healdsburg, Cloverdale, Guerneville, Sebastopol, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Rincon Valley, Sonoma, and Forestville (El Molino High School).

What the Charge is for and How the Funds Collected Will Be Used

The charge is imposed for two purposes: (a) to fund the ongoing operation and maintenance costs of the system and, (b) to pay the capital replacement program costs of the system. The purpose of the capital replacement program is to provide for the long-term replacement of system facilities as they wear out.

Residential Rate Structure For Residential Users With a Public Water Connection

Many surrounding communities (including the Cities of Cotati, Healdsburg, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, and the Town of Windsor) base their sewer rates partially on an estimate of the amount of sewage generated by each household, based on water usage during winter months. A 2011 District study found that such "volume-based" rate structures better account for household sewer discharge, promote water conservation, and provide financial reliability for District services. The study also found that volume-based rates would provide District ratepayers with the opportunity to control a portion of their sewage bills. The volume-based rate structure would only apply to residential customers including multiple family units such as apartments, condominiums and mobile home parks, not commercial accounts.

The proposed volume-based rate calculation is based on two factors:

- **70 Percent Fixed-Costs:** The fixed charge recovers costs that the sewage treatment and collection system incurs regardless of increased or decreased sewage flow into the system. For parcels having more than one ESD assigned, the fixed cost is calculated by multiplying the number of ESDs assigned to the parcel multiplied by the annual fixed charge. All sewer customers must pay at least the fixed charge.
- **30 Percent Volume-Based:** This volume-based charge recovers costs to the sewage treatment and collection system that are affected by use and vary with the amount of sewage conveyed and treated. The volume charge is calculated by the average monthly winter water use per household based on specified winter months, multiplied by 12 months to derive the annual use. Average winter water use provides the best available estimate of indoor water use and its impact to the District's treatment facilities because outdoor irrigation is minimal during the winter months.

For 2013 each residential user with public water and sewer connections and measurable winter water use will be charged based on water consumption of that user in the months of December and January. This information is available on your water bills. See examples below on how to calculate your estimated charge.

The highest residential usage charge will be 20,000 gallons per month per ESD. For properties with more than one ESD assigned, the usage cap is calculated by multiplying the number of ESDs assigned to the parcel by 20,000 gallons. For example, the usage cap for a property assigned 2 ESDs is 40,000 gallons (2.0 ESDs X 20,000 gallons).

If a property has water usage less than 500 gallons per month in the measurement period and does have a water account (indicating an absentee owner), then the variable charge will be calculated based on the average charge of \$811 times the number of ESDs for the parcel.

If a property has no water account, i.e. is on a well, and is connected to the sewer system, their charges will be based on the number of ESDs times \$811, the average rate.

Residential Sewer Charge - Proposed Method

Based on the proposed volume-based rate structure, the 2013 sewer charges for residential customers with a public water connection are:

Sewer Charge Component	Charge
Fixed Charge	\$568 per ESD
Volume Charge	\$.004591 per gallon per month

Estimating Your Residential Sewer Charge

A typical single-family residential customer using an average amount per month will see their bill increase by 5.0% in 2013. However each customer's consumption is unique and actual impacts will vary. The formula below will help you estimate your annual sewer bill based on the proposed rate structure. To determine your average usage, you will need your water bill for the months of January and February 2013. Find the amount of water used for each month in the bill. Add the months of January and February together and divide by two to get the average. Insert this number in the equation below. In addition, to determine the number of ESDs assigned to your property, look on the address label of this notice. The number of ESDs is printed on the label after the APN number. For single family homes, the ESD is one. Other types of residential uses, such as condominiums, triplexes, or homes with additional separate living structures, have different ESD figures.

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Fixed Charge Calculation} \\ \text{Fixed Charge} \times \text{No. of ESDs} \end{array} \right) + \left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Usage Charge} \\ (\text{Your average use from Dec 2012 - Jan 2013}) \times (\text{Usage Rate } \$ \text{ per gallons per month}) \times (12 \text{ months}) \end{array} \right) = \text{Total Annual Sewer Bill}$$

Sample for a Typical Residential User of 4,420 Gallons per Month:

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Fixed Cost} \\ (\$568 \times 1 \text{ ESD}) = \$568 \end{array} \right) + \left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Usage Charge} \\ (4,420 \text{ gallons per month} \times \$0.004591 \times 12) \end{array} \right) = \begin{array}{c} \text{Total Annual Sewer Bill} \\ \$811 \end{array}$$

Sample for a User of 2,000 Gallons per Month:

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Fixed Cost} \\ (\$568 \times 1 \text{ ESD}) = \$568 \end{array} \right) + \left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Usage Charge} \\ (2,000 \text{ gallons per month} \times \$0.004591 \times 12) \end{array} \right) = \begin{array}{c} \text{Total Annual Sewer Bill} \\ \$678 \end{array}$$

Further Information Available Prior to the Hearing

At the hearing, the Board will consider adoption of an ordinance which will establish the increased charge. Copy of the ordinance is on file and available for review at the Sonoma County Water Agency, 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. In addition, the following persons may be contacted at the Agency for further information and/or obtaining copies of the draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2013-14:

Manuel Olvera, Engineering Technician III 707 547-1950
Candi Bryon, Department Analyst 707 521-6212

Property Owner Appeal Procedure

If you have a leak in your water supply line or another reason that you feel the metered water use during the measurement period does not reflect your actual usage, supply the Sonoma County Water Agency the details of the situation and proof it has been fixed. The Water Agency will determine if the situation qualifies fit does, the bill will be adjusted to the average rate of \$811 per ESD.

Property Owner Protest Procedure

This notice has been mailed to you because records of the Sonoma County Assessor list you as an owner of one or more parcels within the District which will be subject to the charge while connected to the system. In the event you have sold property you may have owned within the District, please send this notice to the new owner.

Either prior to or at the public hearing, property owners may submit written protests respecting the charge. At the public hearing, the Board will consider all written protests which have been received by the prescribed deadline. In order to be considered, a written protest must be made on the attached form. Only one protest will be counted per parcel. Only protests signed by the current owner(s) will be allowed and must be received no later than the following deadlines:

- If submitted by mail, they must be received (NOT postmarked) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 20, 2013, at the mailing address on the form.
- If hand delivered, they must be delivered no later than the close of the public hearing on May 21, 2013, to:
Clerk of the Board
Board Meeting Room, as set forth in the opening paragraph

Date of this Notice: April 1, 2013

RATE PROTEST FORM

NOTE: IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED, ANY PROTEST MUST BE ON THIS FORM

WRITTEN PROTEST

I am the parcel owner of the property located at the address on the back of this form. I am submitting this form to protest the proposed sewer rate increase.

Additional Comments: _____

Use opposite side or attach additional sheets if needed.

Signature of Property Owner Required

Print Name

Fold Here First

Place
Postage
Here

Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa CA 95403

Fold Here Second

Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa CA 95403

PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SANTA ROSA, CA
PERMIT NO. 64

IMPORTANT
Prop 218 Notice
Enclosed: Sonoma
Valley County
Sanitation District

Hearing Date: May 21, 2013, 10:00 a.m.
Hearing Location: 575 Administration Drive,
Room 102A, Santa Rosa, CA

Proposition 218 Notice

Included in this issue is the **Proposition 218 Notice** for the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District's proposed Fiscal Year 2013-2014 sanitation rates. The Notice with information about the proposed rates is included on pages 5-6 of this newsletter. The return protest form is located on page 7. Frequently asked questions about the District's budget process is on pages 3-4.

For more information, visit
www.sonomacountywater.org/svcsd.

**Important Customer
Information Inside!**

- ✓ Proposed Rates
- ✓ Upcoming Public Hearing
- ✓ Rate Protest Form

Securing our Future by Investing in our Water Resources, Environment & Community

www.sonomacountywater.org

